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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; UK PM TONY BLAIR'S DECISION TO STEP DOWN &
ITS IMPACT ON THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION; FIRST BIO-FUELS CONGRESS OF
THE AMERICAS; 05/11/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's major international stories include the impact on the Bush administration of UK PM Tony Blair's decision to step down; and the First Bio-Fuels Congress of the Americas, which will be held in Buenos Aires and will feature former US VP Al Gore as the keynote speaker.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Bush is now more isolated to defend the war in Iraq"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," writes (05/11) "Tony Blair's decision to step down after 10 years in power immediately impacted on the White House. His friend, US President George W. Bush was left even more isolated, particularly in defending the devastating war in Iraq.

"Five years after the creation of the 'coalition of the willing,' it has lost strength. At least 17 out of its 38 country-members have left... And those who are still in it only contribute 14,200 troops, some 10 per cent of the total number of troops. The UK contributes 7,200 troops, a little more than half of the total number of soldiers. And this is one of the reasons why Blair is still today more loved in the US than in his own country.

"Americans believe Blair to be a charismatic and well-prepared leader, and while they (as well as the Brits) increasingly reject the war, they also acknowledge Blair's monolithic partnership with Bush and before that with Bill Clinton. According to Daniel Benjamin, the head of the Europe-US Department at the Brookings Institution, '(Blair) is considered a talented politician and a big US friend.' 'In fact, he has done a better work than our own government in justifying the war.

"... In spite of Blair and Bush's political sunset, analysts expect that the 'vital relationship' between the two governments will continue. Blair's probable successor, Gordon Brown, has a tougher reputation than the outgoing leader. According to Nile Gardiner, the head of the Margaret Thatcher Center at the conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington, he could have a more distant relationship with Bush."

- "Al Gore arrives (in Argentina) to promote investment in bio-fuels"

Natasha Niebieskikwiat, political columnist of leading "Clarín," penned (05/11) "Al Gore has already caused the impact of a guru expected by his followers with feverish anxiety. The former US VP

during the Clinton administration is arriving today in the country and he will stay seven hours in Buenos Aires to lecture on the environment and renewable energy...

"... Gore will close the First Bio-Fuels Congress of the Americas to be held in Buenos Aires... Reportedly, the Argentine Government negotiated until the last minute the attendance of Senator Cristina Kirchner to the dinner party. Also Mayor Jorge Telerman showed interest in approaching the Democrat.

"... Gore is anxiously awaited by those Argentines who see alliances being made in the world to manufacture bio-fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel in order to replace non renewable resources like oil. And Argentina is reported to have huge potential in the development of bio-diesel."

- "The US proposes its cooperation in bio-diesel development"

Pablo Fernandez Blanco, columnist of business-financial "El Cronista," reports "US DCM Michael Matera said yesterday that his country is willing to engage in talks with Argentina to reach a cooperation deal in the development of bio-fuels. In the framework of the First Bio-Fuels Congress for the Americas, which is set to be capped by former VP Al Gore today, Matera said 'Argentina will play an essential role in the development of bio-fuels in the region.' 'The private sector will lead a real revolution in the manufacture of bio-fuels,' although he underscored that 'governments should create an appropriate framework for this to happen.'

"With the purpose of lowering the influence of oil byproducts in its economy while restricting the power of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez..., the Bush administration started this year a crusade in Latin America aimed at finding partners in the development of bio-fuels. Firstly, it reached a framework deal with Brazil, and now it intends to hold negotiations with Argentina with the same purpose."

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